

RETAIL PRICES - DECEMBER QUARTER, 1953.

All Items - "C" Series.

"C" Series index numbers of retail prices of all items for the December quarter of 1953 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases, December Quarter, 1953.

City.	Index Number.	Increase from Year Ended June, 1939.	Increase from December Quarter, 1952.	Increase from September Quarter, 1953.
		%	%	%
Brisbane ..	2,176	152.1	4.2	1.5
Toowoomba ..	2,193	157.7	3.9	1.0
Rockhampton ..	2,202	155.7	3.5	1.1
Townsville ..	2,277	149.7	3.8	1.1
Bundaberg ..	2,137	154.1	2.4	0.8
Warwick ..	2,168	163.7	3.1	1.0

The "C" Series retail prices index number for Queensland (weighted average of "five towns") increased from 2,154 in the September quarter to 2,184 in the December quarter of 1953. The rise, which was equivalent to 1.4 per cent., was 0.1 per cent. more than in the preceding quarter, but the same as in the September quarter of 1952. Increases in the six different towns for which data are available varied from 0.8 per cent. in Bundaberg to 1.5 per cent. in Brisbane.

The major factor in the quarter's increase was food and grocery prices, and in this, as in the preceding quarter, an increase in potato prices was outstanding. Food and grocery prices rose by over 2 per cent. in three towns, about 1 per cent. in two towns, and 0.6 per cent. in the other. The increase in the weighted average for the "five towns" was 2.2 per cent. Clothing and footwear in the five towns decreased by 0.3 per cent., and miscellaneous items rose by 3.0 per cent. Although the proportionate rise was greater for miscellaneous items than for food and groceries, the latter accounted for the greater part of the rise in the index owing to the greater weight given to them. Of the rise of 1.5 per cent. during the quarter in the Brisbane index, food and groceries were responsible for approximately 1.0, and miscellaneous items for the remaining 0.5. A very small downward effect of the clothing and footwear prices was offset by the upward tendency of house rents.

The total increase in the "C" Series index number for Brisbane over the period of twelve months ended December, 1953, was 4.2 per cent., compared with 8.0 per cent. for 1952 and 25.1 per cent. for 1951. The index for the recent quarter was 152.1 per cent. higher than the average for 1938-39, indicating that £2 10s. 5d. is now required to buy goods and services which would have cost £1 before the war.

Percentage changes during the last quarter and since 1938-39 in food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and miscellaneous items are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases^a, December Quarter, 1953.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1953.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1953.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1953.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	190.7	2.4	275.2	-0.2	108.2	3.0
Toowoomba ..	206.6	0.6	275.6	-0.3	107.0	2.9
Rockhampton	184.6	2.1	265.6	-0.8	117.3	2.7
Townsville	178.5	2.0	272.5	-1.0	116.2	3.5
Bundaberg ..	179.2	0.9	268.5	-0.9	103.6	2.5
Warwick ..	198.2	1.0	274.5	-0.3	113.0	3.6

^a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Food and Groceries.

The increases recorded in the food and grocery index numbers for December quarter were chiefly due to increases in the prices of potatoes, meat, bacon, and bread. The increases were partly offset by a decrease in the price of milk in five of the towns covered by the survey. The relatively smaller increases in Toowoomba, Bundaberg, and Warwick were mainly due to the increases in potato prices in those cities being less than in the other cities.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index remained stationary during the quarter in Warwick but increased in the other five cities for which data are collected by amounts ranging from 0.4 per cent. in Rockhampton and Townsville to 3.2 per cent. in Toowoomba.

Clothing and Footwear.

The clothing and footwear index numbers decreased in each of the cities for which the index is calculated. The largest decrease occurred in Townsville (1.0 per cent.) and the smallest in Brisbane (0.2 per cent.). Only small variations were recorded in the prices of the individual items included in these index numbers, the principal changes being decreases in the prices of women's and girls' cotton frocks.

Miscellaneous Items.

The chief causes of the increases recorded in the miscellaneous items index were higher tram fares and, in Brisbane, Townsville, and Warwick, higher charges for gas.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in December quarter, 1953, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Items.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	2	1	0	0 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	4	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	6 $\frac{3}{4}$
Rockhampton	1	0	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	5 $\frac{3}{4}$	18	11 $\frac{1}{2}$		19	10 $\frac{1}{2}$		1	1	2 $\frac{3}{4}$
Townsville ..	1	0	11 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	9 $\frac{1}{4}$
Bundaberg ..		19	7 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{4}$		15	4 $\frac{1}{4}$		19	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
Warwick ..		19	11	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{2}$		16	2 $\frac{1}{4}$		19	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	6 $\frac{3}{4}$

the In relation to Brisbane, the prices of all items together decreased in each of provincial cities for which the index numbers are calculated. The largest variation in these relative prices occurred in Bundaberg, where the amount required to purchase goods costing £1 in Brisbane fell from 19s. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. during September quarter to 19s. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. during December quarter. The decreases in the other cities ranged from $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £ in Townsville to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ in Warwick.

The prices of food and groceries in each of the five provincial cities for which data are collected are higher than in Brisbane, but during the recent quarter these prices came closer to Brisbane in all cities. Before the war both Toowoomba and Warwick had cheaper food than Brisbane, but now in these places, as in the other three cities, food is dearer than in Brisbane. However, during the recent quarter food and grocery prices increased less in Toowoomba than in any of the other cities, and in that city food and groceries costing £1 in Brisbane were only $\frac{3}{4}$ d. dearer in Toowoomba, compared with an excess of 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in the September quarter.

Clothing and footwear prices are close to Brisbane prices in all provincial cities. In Rockhampton, Bundaberg, and Warwick they were 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ lower, and in Townsville 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ higher, than in Brisbane in the latest quarter. In Toowoomba they were $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ higher. In all five provincial cities prices in this group fell more from the previous quarter's level than they did in Brisbane.

With the exception of rent, miscellaneous items show the greatest range of variation between the cities. Prices for these items were higher in each of the five provincial cities than in Brisbane, those closest to the metropolitan being in Bundaberg, where the excess over Brisbane prices was 4½d. in the £. Of the cities covered by the survey, Townsville has the highest prices for miscellaneous items. In that city the excess over Brisbane prices increased during the quarter from 1s. 8d. to 1s. 9½d. in the £. The largest change in the relativity in the latest quarter was a rise of 1¾d. in the £ in the Warwick excess over Brisbane.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

On 12th September the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration decided that in the case of certain awards the automatic ("cost of living") adjustments should no longer operate. In a series of subsequent declarations of the Court, other awards have been varied in a similar manner. The basic wages which continue to operate under these varied awards are shown below.

State Industrial Courts in New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia have not made any basic wage adjustments since their declarations following the publication of index numbers for the June quarter of 1953. In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, an increase of 2s. in the State wage rates, which had generally been adjusted with the wage of the Commonwealth Court, was made following the publication of the September index number, and another of 1s. followed the December index number. In Tasmania, where rates are also controlled by Wages Boards, no adjustment has been made since August, 1953.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the September quarter index numbers, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females, and, following the publication of the December quarter index numbers, a further increase of 3s. for males and 2s. for females was made.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.

Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series).			Commonwealth Basic Wage.			State Basic Wage.						
	June Qtr., 1953.	Sept. Qtr., 1953.	Dec. Qtr., 1953.	Males. ^a			Males.			Females.			Date of Operation.
				£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2,115	2,143	2,176	10	18	0	11	5	0	7	11	0	1. 2. 54
Sydney	2,360	2,388	2,385	12	3	0	12	3	0	9	2	0	1. 8. 53
Melbourne	2,279	2,301	2,310	11	15	0		b			b		-
Adelaide	2,238	2,264	2,272	11	11	0	11	11	0	8	13	0	1. 8. 53
Perth	2,290	2,328	2,314	11	16	0	12	6	6	8	0	3	28. 7. 53
Hobart	2,351	2,444	2,485	12	2	0		b			b		-

^a The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

^b No State wage declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court has usually been followed to a large extent.

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BRISBANE.

22nd February, 1954.

Table No. 1 - The "All Items" Retail Prices Index - "C" Series.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1953.	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1952.	March, 1953.	June, 1953.	Sept., 1953.	Dec., 1953.
Brisbane	863	1,079	2,135	2,089	2,105	2,115	2,143	2,176
Toowoomba	851	1,092	2,160	2,110	2,126	2,149	2,172	2,193
Rockhampton ..	861	1,084	2,166	2,128	2,139	2,146	2,177	2,202
Townsville	912	1,119	2,243	2,194	2,215	2,228	2,251	2,277
Bundaberg	841	1,059	2,118	2,086	2,104	2,109	2,121	2,137
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	1,082	2,145	2,100	2,116	2,127	2,154	2,184
Warwick	822	1,073	2,140	2,102	2,114	2,130	2,147	2,168

Table No. 2 - Food and Groceries Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1953.	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1952.	March, 1953.	June, 1953.	Sept., 1953.	Dec., 1953.
Brisbane	856	971	2,413	2,321	2,361	2,372	2,429	2,488
Toowoomba	814	1,010	2,450	2,361	2,396	2,426	2,481	2,496
Rockhampton .. .	895	1,012	2,476	2,383	2,419	2,443	2,494	2,547
Townsville	955	1,057	2,598	2,506	2,553	2,568	2,609	2,660
Bundaberg	903	1,027	2,474	2,382	2,430	2,446	2,498	2,521
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	984	2,434	2,342	2,382	2,396	2,452	2,506
Warwick	846	1,000	2,472	2,394	2,423	2,444	2,497	2,523

Table No. 3 - Clothing and Footwear Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1953.	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1952.	March, 1953.	June, 1953.	Sept., 1953.	Dec., 1953.
Brisbane	829	1,454	3,103	3,088	3,083	3,104	3,116	3,110
Toowoomba	829	1,429	3,115	3,086	3,091	3,133	3,123	3,114
Rockhampton .. .	845	1,477	3,105	3,128	3,114	3,100	3,115	3,089
Townsville	840	1,457	3,127	3,097	3,090	3,130	3,160	3,129
Bundaberg	839	1,447	3,129	3,152	3,149	3,154	3,121	3,092
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	831	1,454	3,107	3,093	3,088	3,109	3,119	3,110
Warwick	825	1,441	3,101	3,096	3,101	3,113	3,098	3,090